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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1.   (Previously Presented)   An analytical system for facilitating decision making given a situation by generating and accessing arguments, wherein each argument has an associated conclusion as to whether the given situation will likely have a negative or positive result, the analytical system comprising:

a database for storing a plurality of templates that each include a plurality of questions which when answered generate a particular argument having an associated conclusion regarding a particular situation that is based on answers to its associated template questions; and

an argument server comprising:

means for a user to select one of the templates which is most relevant to the given situation

means for receiving answers to one or more of the selected template's questions;

means for generating a new argument having an associated conclusion based on such answers, the associated conclusion indicating whether the given situation will likely have a positive or negative result; and

means for associating supporting evidence provided by said user with said answers to said template questions.

2.   (Cancelled)

3.   (Previously Presented) An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent question that has a plurality of children questions is automatically answered by answering the

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parent's children questions.

4.   (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein the argument server is further configured to associate a rationale with each answer to each template question.

5.   (Previously Presented) An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein input to one or more of the selected template's questions is received from a plurality of users over a computer network.

6.   (Previously Presented) An analytical system as recited in claim 5, wherein the argument server is further configured to allow one or more of the plurality of users to generate and associate comments to at least a portion of the new argument.

7.   (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 6, wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users.

8.   (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein each template question is a multiple choice question.

9.   (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 8, wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the particular situation have a positive or negative result.

10.   (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 9, wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of answers that partition the likelihood scale.

11.   (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 9, wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein the argument server is further

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configured to automatically answer a parent question having a plurality of children questions based on answers to the parent's children questions.

12.   (Original)   An analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein the argument server is further configured to allow more than one answer for each question.

13.   (Original)   An analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein the parent question is automatically answered using a answering technique selected by a user.

14.   (Previously Presented)   An analytical system as recited in claim 13, wherein the answering technique is selected from a group consisting of a maximization technique, an averaging technique, and a minimization technique.

15.   (Original)   An analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein each answer within the hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each color representing a different answer so that the hierarchical structure's colors convey a line of reasoning.

16.   (Original)   An analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein one or more template questions is associated with a second hierarchical structure of questions and the first and second hierarchical structures together form a set of cascaded arguments.

17.   (Original)   An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein one or more template questions have an associated discovery tool that facilitates answering of such associated template question.

18.   (Original)   An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein each template is associated with a situation descriptors and the argument server selects one of the templates which is most relevant to a particular situation by comparing a current situation to the situation descriptors associated with the templates to thereby find the

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most relevant templates having the most closely matching situation descriptors.

19.   (Original)   An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein the argument server is further configured to allow creation of a new template, wherein the new template is created by an expert.

20.   (Currently Amended)   A method for facilitating decision making given a situation by accessing or generating an argument having a conclusion for the given situation, the method comprising:
      ~~enabling~~ presenting to a user ~~to search~~ a plurality of searchable templates ~~for a relevant template most related to the given situation~~, wherein each template includes a plurality of questions;
      receiving from said user a selection of one of said templates, said one of said templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation;
      receiving from said user one or more answers to one or more questions of the relevant template;
      forming a new argument having a conclusion based on the one or more answers; ~~and~~
      associating supporting evidence provided by said user with at least one answered template question; and
      publishing said new argument for use by said user.

21   (Cancelled)

22.   (Previously Presented)   A method as recited in claim 20, further comprising associating a rationale provided by said user to each answered template question.

23.   (Previously Presented)   A method as recited in claim 20, wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent question that has a

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plurality of children questions is automatically answered by answering the parent's children questions.

24.   (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein input to one or more of the selected template's questions is received from a plurality of users over a computer network.

25.   (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 24, the method further comprising allowing one or more of the plurality of users to generate and associate comments to at least a portion of the new argument.

26.   (Original) A method as recited in claim 25, wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users.

27.   (Original) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein each template question is a multiple choice question.

28.   (Original) A method as recited in claim 27, wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the particular situation have a positive or negative result.

29.   (Original) A method as recited in claim 28, wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of answers that partition the likelihood scale.

30.   (Original) A method as recited in claim 28, wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, the method further comprising automatically answering a parent question having a plurality of children questions based on answers to the parent's children questions.

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31.   (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 30, the method further comprising receiving more than one answer for at least one question.

32.   (Original) A method as recited in claim 30, wherein the parent question is automatically answered using a answering technique selected by a user.

33.   (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 32, wherein the answering technique is selected from a group consisting of a maximization technique, an averaging technique, and a minimization technique.

34.   (Original) A method as recited in claim 30, wherein each answer within the hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each color representing a different answer so that the hierarchical structure's colors convey a line of reasoning.

35.   (Original) A method as recited in claim 30, wherein one or more template questions is associated with a second hierarchical structure of questions and the first anc second hierarchical structures together form a set of cascaded arguments.

36.   (Original) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein one or more template questions have an associated discovery tool that facilitates answering of such associated template question.

37.   (Original) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein each template is associated with a situation descriptors, the method further comprising selecting one of the templates which is most relevant to a particular situation by comparing a current situation to the situation descriptors associated with the templates to thereby find the most relevant templates having the most closely matching situation descriptors.

38.   (Original) A method as recited in claim 20, the method further comprising

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creating a new template, wherein the new template is created by an expert.

39.   (Currently Amended)   A computer readable medium containing program instructions for facilitating decision making given a situation by accessing or generating an argument having a conclusion for the given situation, the computer readable medium comprising:

computer code for ~~enabling~~ presenting to a user ~~to search~~ a plurality of searchable templates ~~for a relevant template most related to the given situation~~, wherein each template includes a plurality of questions;

computer code for receiving from said user a selection of one of said templates, said one of said templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation;

computer code for receiving from said user one or more answers to one or more questions of the relevant template;

computer code for forming a new argument having a conclusion based on the one or more answers;

computer code for associating supporting evidence provided by said user with at least one answered template question; and

a computer readable medium that stores the computer codes.

40.   (Currently Amended)   A computer system operable facilitate decision making given a situation by accessing or generating an argument having a conclusion for the given situation, the computer system comprising:

one or more processors;

one or more memory, wherein at least one of the processors and memory are adapted to:

~~enable~~ present to a user ~~to search~~ a plurality of searchable templates ~~for a relevant template most related to the given situation~~, wherein each template includes a plurality of questions;

receive from said user a selection of one of said templates, said one of said templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation;

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receive from the user one or more answers to one or more questions of the relevant template;

form a new argument having a conclusion based on the one or more answers; and

associate supporting evidence provided by the user to at least one answered template question.

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